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ABSTRACT

This booklet details the findings of a survey, conducted by the Committee on Learning Skills Centers of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, concerning the utilization of learning skills centers to teach composition in institutions of higher learning. Responses from 38 public two-year colleges, 2 private two-year colleges, 18 public four-year colleges, and 17 private four-year colleges provide information concerning the use and services of learning skills centers, student enrollment and motivation, faculty utilization, and other program characteristics. (KS)

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LEARNING SKILLS CENTERS: A CCCC REPORT

Committee on Learning Skills Centers

ERIC *Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills*
National Institute of Education

Conference on College Composition and Communication
1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801

CS 202 980

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Foreword

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a national information system developed by the U.S. Office of Education and now sponsored by the National Institute of Education (NIE). It provides ready access to descriptions of exemplary programs, research and development efforts, and related information useful in developing more effective educational programs.

Through its network of specialized centers or clearinghouses, each of which is responsible for a particular educational area, ERIC acquires, evaluates, abstracts, and indexes current significant information and lists this information in its reference publications.

ERIC/RCS, the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills disseminates educational information related to research, instruction, and personnel preparation at all levels and in all institutions. The scope of interest of the Clearinghouse includes relevant research reports, literature reviews, curriculum guides and descriptions, conference papers, project or program reviews, and other print materials related to all aspects of reading, English, educational journalism, and speech communication.

The ERIC system has already made available—through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service—much informative data. However, if the findings of specific educational research are to be intelligible to teachers and applicable to teaching, considerable bodies of data must be reevaluated, focused, translated, and molded into an essentially different context. Rather than resting at the point of making research reports readily accessible, NIE has directed the separate clearinghouses to work with professional organizations in developing information analysis papers in specific areas within the scope of the clearinghouses.

ERIC/RCS is pleased to cooperate with the Conference on College Composition and Communication in making the CCCC Learning Skills Centers Report available to the members of NCTE.

Bernard O'Donnell
Director, ERIC/RCS

Introduction

When the committee assigned to make this investigation first met, in 1973, we had no common definition for the term "skills center." Most of us had had some experience, direct or indirect, with some kind of language laboratory, but when we compared experiences, we found the variations greater than the similarities. One member had been teaching groups of twenty to twenty-five so-called remedial students in a traditional class situation. Another member worked eight hours a day in an area where students with special problems simply dropped in for the help they needed when they felt a need for it. Still another member told a horrifying story of an institution in which freshman composition classes had been completely abolished and replaced by a so-called "lab" where four hundred students plodded through programmed mechanical drills, supervised by a single certificated English teacher. (Since then, we are told, that system of "English teaching" has been discontinued.)

Gradually, as we developed the questionnaire and analyzed the responses, we arrived at a few rough definitions.

A *center*, as we use the term, is a special location where students can come, or be sent, for special instruction not usually included in "regular" college classes. Centers can exist within traditional departments—often although not always English departments—or they can be entities unconnected to other divisions of the college. They can offer individualized instruction, special classes, tutoring, or something in between.

Learning skills include reading, for both comprehension and speed; writing, for fluency, organization, and mechanics; effective studying, for listening, note-taking, outlining, and test-taking; and sometimes speaking, for confidence and coherence. Learning skills can be quantitative as well as linguistic, of course, and many centers offer help in elementary mathematics; this report, however, deals only with language skills.

Individualized instruction, in the best sense, means personal instruction. It means discovering what each student's needs are, selecting materials or offering advice to fit those needs, and providing personal analysis of each student's progress. Such personal instruction can operate through tutoring, one-to-one student-teacher conferences, or small group discussions. Almost everyone agrees that personal instruction succeeds, and almost everyone agrees that it's expensive.

In the worst sense, "individualized instruction" can mean segregating students by standardized tests—which may or may not be realistically diagnostic; issuing to students sets of routine exercises—written, taped, filmed, or occasionally computerized—which the students are required to complete on their own; and measuring success by the scores students achieve on another standardized test. The danger here is not just that such so-called individualized instruction is impersonal and dehumanizing, although it is. There are two greater

dangers: first, that such standardized drills concentrate only on superficial mechanical skills and entirely ignore the more basic objectives of good English courses; and second, that there is often very little relationship between the ability to get a passing score on an objective test and the ability to write a passable paper, so that even mechanical skills are not effectively taught. The term "individualized instruction" may become a semantic dodge, worthy of investigation by the Committee on Public Doublespeak of NCTE.

Programmed material usually refers to a study unit in which the objectives are stated at the beginning of the unit, in which the student is shown the expected response as soon as each question has been answered or each problem completed; and in which, if the unit has been well constructed, the final test requires mastery of only the skills or the information covered in the unit. Good programmed materials, sensibly used, have some obvious advantages. It's useful for students to be told clearly what they are expected to learn. It's also useful to reinforce the learning step by step rather than allow the students to fumble through a whole section before their mistakes are corrected. And it's undoubtedly fairer to test students on the single concept covered in a unit rather than on a range of skills they may or may not have encountered somewhere else. But programmed materials have some equally obvious disadvantages in teaching writing. They cannot teach fluency or appropriateness, style or creativity. Beyond the most superficial level, they cannot deal with the organization of ideas or of thought. Although good programmed materials can be helpful in teaching mechanical skills, they cannot teach students to write. Only practice in writing can do that.

These are the definitions, and the reservations, that guided the committee in preparing this report. Not everybody who responded to the questionnaire understood these definitions in quite the same way, and certainly not all the respondents shared our reservations.

The committee could not fulfill one part of the original charge—to investigate skills centers still in the proposal stage. Most of the colleges which were planning centers had no very definite notion of the form those centers would take. Rather than offering information, they asked us for it. We hope that this report will answer some of their questions.

We are grateful to the many teachers, students, and project directors in established centers who did respond to our request for information. Without their patience and generosity in answering a somewhat complicated and time-consuming series of questions, this information could not have been accumulated. We are also grateful to the many CCCC members who gave us valuable advice and assistance, most notably Richard L. Larson, Herbert Lehman College of the City University of New York.

In 1973, when work began, the committee consisted of Robert Blackwood, Wilbur Wright College, Chicago (chairperson); Marian Bashinski, Florida State University; Ancella Bickley, West Virginia State College; John Doty, Seattle Community College; Betty Martin, Odessa College; Judith Stitzel, West Virginia University; Ann Taylor, Maricopa College; Elisabeth McPherson, Forest Park Community College, St. Louis (for CCCC); and Nancy Prichard (liaison for NCTE). During the two years of the study,

membership on the committee changed somewhat. By late 1974, the committee members were Marian Bashinski, Helen Mills (American River Community College, Sacramento), Elisabeth McPherson, Nancy Prichard, Judith Stitzel, and Ann Taylor; it is these six people who are responsible for this report.

Elisabeth McPherson,
for the Committee

Learning Skills Centers

Background

At its annual business meeting in November 1972, the National Council of Teachers of English adopted a resolution "On Investigating Effects of English Skills Centers." This resolution grew out of a concern expressed by some teachers involved in these centers that the significant potential of skills centers was in danger of being subverted. The original resolution was adopted by those present at the Midwest Regional Conference on English in the Two-Year College in the early spring of 1972. This resolution was referred to the annual meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication in Boston a few weeks later, where it was also adopted (with some modification) by the members present and sent to the NCTE Resolutions Committee. The following wording was adopted at the NCTE business meeting in November 1972:

> *Background:* There has been an increase at the college and university level in the number of skills centers which purport to offer individualized instruction through the use, in varying degrees, of programmed material. Many teachers are voicing concern that some of these skills centers are failing to promote the pedagogical objectives of the profession. For example, there has been little effort to define "individualized instruction" in relation to the use of programmed material. Furthermore, although most centers use the phrase "individualized instruction," the teacher-student ratio may vary from 1-10 in one institution to 1-200 in another. Be it therefore
>
> *Resolved,* That the NCTE form a committee to investigate both established and proposed skills centers at colleges and universities in order to determine the degree to which they promote and/or hinder the objectives of English courses. Be it further
>
> *Resolved,* That the findings of this committee be disseminated through appropriate means of publication.

Because the resolution had come from a regional conference on English in two-year colleges and from CCCC, and because skills centers were assumed to be most often found in two-year colleges and/or used mainly by freshmen and sophomores at four-year colleges, the NCTE officers asked CCCC to implement the resolution. Members of the committee appointed for that purpose worked at the annual meetings of CCCC and NCTE and by correspondence. The first of their activities was to send out survey postcards to two- and four-year institutions to find out whether they had learning skills centers. In March 1974 postcards were mailed, with an explanatory cover letter, to 600 two- and four-year institutions, representing every fifth institution on the NCTE mailing list. A total of 228 (38 percent) postcards were returned; of those, 158 (26 percent) were usable. (Attachment A shows the returns broken down by size, two-year/four-year, and public/private.)

Meanwhile, the committee had continued to work on a questionnaire, which went through five drafts, each one much shorter and simpler than the previous draft. By September 1974 it was ready for printing and

mailing. During the 1974-75 college year, 159 questionnaires were sent out; 75 usable* questionnaires were returned, from the following types of institutions:

Public two-year colleges	38
Private two-year colleges	2
Public four-year colleges	18
Private four-year colleges	17

The computer tabulation of questionnaire results made no distinction among kinds of colleges (this complete tabulation, covering all 78 of the questionnaires returned, is included in this report as Attachment B). The committee, however, felt that the analysis might be more useful if the returns were separated according to the type of institution, inasmuch as institutional purposes, types of financial support, and the nature of the students varied widely. The body of this report, therefore, discusses the results separately, depending on the kind of college reporting. The analysis of the returns from two-year public institutions—almost all of them called community colleges—is given in the greatest detail for three reasons: first, the original request for the survey came from an organization representing two-year colleges; second, this group constitutes by far the largest number of returns, thus providing a broader base from which to draw conclusions; and third, these institutions are all "open door," and it might be assumed that a greater proportion of their students would be directed or attracted to a skills center.

Other methods of analysis might have been used: size of the institution (but this information was not requested in the final version of the questionnaire); type of financial support for the center (but many directors did not respond to this question, often because they did not know, although one two-year college did say it operated entirely under a Title III grant); or admissions policies (but such a large percentage of directors said their institutions had open admission that this division seemed hardly worthwhile). If a further, more detailed survey of learning skills centers is undertaken by some other committee, different methods of analysis might prove fruitful.

*One return came back from a college which does not operate a skills center under our definition of the term, and two returns were so incomplete it seemed useless to include them.

Responses from Public Two-Year Colleges

The thirty-eight public two-year colleges, ranging in size from 300 to 14,000 students, all reported open admissions policies. The centers they operate go by a variety of names, although eighteen have "learning" as part of the title—Learning Center, Learning Laboratory, etc. Others are called Reading Centers (3), Writing Centers (2), Study Skills Centers (4) or Communications Centers (4). One is a Personalized Achievement Lab (PAL), one a Tutorial Lab, and one is popularly referred to by the metaphorical designation "The Bridge." In eight colleges the center is a separate unit of the institution; in four it operates as a separate unit, even though it is partly controlled by one of the other departments; and in thirty it is operated by and within a department, most often (16) by the English department. Other directors report the center run through the Continuing or Adult Education department (3), the Library or Audio-Visual department (4), the Counseling department (1), or General Studies (1). Some colleges did not answer this question, or answered it in a way hard to interpret. In the majority of the

community colleges reporting (29), the centers are paid for by the colleges themselves, but in nine they are partially supported by federal or state money.

The largest number of community college centers were established at the request of the administration (17). The next largest number were requested by an already existing department—ten by the English department, one by Community Services, one by Counseling, and two each by Mathematics and Psychology. Five came about through committees that crossed departmental lines; three were initiated by student demand, one by the Board of Regents; and two were part of the original plan of the institution.

Questions 22 through 28 dealt with how the centers were staffed (most of this information is included in Attachment C). It is interesting that only four of the colleges have more than five teachers with M.S.'s in English or education working in the centers. Of the colleges that do have more than five, two are colleges where the center provides the only available writing courses, and another is a very large multi-ethnic institution which serves two thousand students in its writing laboratory, one thousand in its reading center. Although more than half the colleges have at least one person with a graduate degree in English working full-time in the center, some of the centers are operated entirely by part-time teachers with B.A.'s in English, by graduate assistants from nearby four-year schools, by student assistants, or by paraprofessionals. It seems clear that the title "director" is more than honorary; most of them do much of the work in the center. In one college the director of the program is listed as a teacher's aide, but in another it is the president of the institution. Most programs operate without clerical help, although four do have full-time secretaries. It seems probable, however, from the variety of paraprofessional help mentioned—from work/study students to counsellors to assistants paid from federal funds for the handicapped to retired people in the community volunteering their time—that most centers do have some assistance in record keeping.

In many of the two-year colleges students can receive credit in reading and study skills for work done in the center, but in only a few can they receive credit for English courses. Of the colleges where English credit is possible, even fewer allow this credit to replace regular courses. Of the twelve which give credit for English as a second language, only four use the center as the sole way such credit can be gained; of the eighteen which give credit in remedial composition, only four use the center as the only means; of the twelve which give non-transfer composition credit, only two; and of the thirteen where work in the center can substitute for the required freshman transfer course in composition, only four. (For a detailed report of this breakdown, see Attachment D.)

The reports from the four colleges which use the center as the only way to gain credit for the required freshman transfer course in composition are especially interesting, since the original resolutions sprang from a fear that programmed learning in large groups, supervised by a very few qualified English teachers, might replace more traditional writing courses emphasizing more important parts of the discipline. Judging from the reports of three of the colleges, these fears, as they pertain to impersonalized, barely supervised groups, seem unjustified. In all three schools students are given a choice as to the

direction their studies will take. In two they can choose between working in the lab and taking a more traditional course, and in the other they can select from a list of more than sixty sets of objectives. This last school reports that "our students do not care for multi-media instruction . . . they prefer a learning plan which offers a more economical use of time . . . they may read the learning strategies, do them, work on them alone or with others, or get as much help from the instructor" as they want. In none of these schools is the number of students in the lab at one time any greater than thirty.

All thirty-eight colleges said students could come to the center voluntarily, and thirty-three said they could come at the suggestion of a classroom teacher. In some colleges, sometimes, students are required to attend; the requirement can be made by classroom teachers (25 schools) or by counselors (13), or it can be the result of test scores (15), a combination of writing sample and test scores (12), or a writing sample (9). Two or three schools emphasized the optional nature of their centers by crossing out "required by" and inserting "suggested by."

The number of students served by the centers varies widely, from seventy-five students a year to as many as three thousand. Some directors commented that exact figures were hard to obtain, and others mentioned that the numbers they gave represented the total number of visits rather than the number of individual students. All but one of the centers encourage individual students to drop in on an unscheduled basis; twenty-nine make scheduled individual appointments; and twenty-six see some students in scheduled groups. Only seven of those where students are seen in groups allow these groups to be larger than twenty. The group size most frequently mentioned was eleven to fifteen, even though six colleges keep their groups smaller than five. All but three of the centers reported that some students stay in the center only long enough to complete their individual projects. Nineteen reported that some students stay for a year's work, and eighteen that some students stay more than a year. Apparently the length of attendance in most of the centers is highly flexible.

Printed, programmed instructional materials, programmed cassettes, tapes, or records, and one-to-one tutorial methods are used in all the centers. Reading machines, diagnostic tests, and evaluative tests are used in at least thirty-three. Only four listed a computer outlet as an available instructional tool. Almost all the colleges (23-28) reported that students select their own goals, learning materials, activities, and instructional techniques. Two colleges mentioned peer tutoring and evaluation, in addition to seminars and discussion groups, as being methods not listed in the questionnaire. (A tabulation of all responses to this question is included as Attachment E.)

Only twelve colleges said their centers had either developed or discovered special instructional techniques geared to the needs of specific socioeconomic, linguistic, or geographic groups. Twenty-five said they had made no such effort. Of the twelve who did report specialized techniques, some did not say specifically what they were. One college did mention the need for ethnically diverse faculty, one the need for bilingual instructors; and two or three emphasized the necessity of using special ethnic literature and ESL materials. One suggested units in using

the dictionary and reading newspapers; another suggested careful counseling; yet another said that the same techniques and reinforcement which "resulted in improved academic performance and retention of students among the low income blacks and Mexican Americans had proved effective for poor whites, military retirees, and other persons who have been out of education for a protracted period of time." One college, in answer to this question, commented that "Our center is not a place; it is a service. We offer almost identical service in several locations of the county. We do not have a campus."

On the other hand, thirty-five colleges said their centers do individualize instruction according to the needs and desires of individual students. Only one said it did not. The most frequently mentioned method of individualizing work was the diagnostic test (10 colleges), with identification of weaknesses a close second (8). Among other devices listed were tutorial programs (7), student-instructor learning contracts (3), weekly conferences (3), and work related to the students' other classes (4). Unfortunately, the term "individualized instruction" does not have a clear definition, and it is difficult to tell whether it means students working in isolation on predetermined materials or students who are given individual attention and help.

Most of the directors who responded seemed to believe that the students who use the center are satisfied with the services it provides. In answer to the question about why students drop out of the center, a substantial number of colleges checked low motivation as being "frequently" the reason. Lack of a sense of progress, conflict with jobs, economic or emotional factors, or the time demands of other courses were given by many schools as being "sometimes" the causes. The directors thought that instructional method was "seldom" the cause (20 colleges), although fifteen thought it might sometimes be, and two thought it never was. Seventeen thought embarrassment associated with doing remedial work was seldom a factor, nine thought it sometimes might be, four said frequently, and four said never. (A report of responses from public two-year colleges to this question is given in Attachment F.)

In the final section of the questionnaire, where the directors were invited to mention problems or innovations not covered elsewhere, several colleges mentioned restricted budgets. They need more money—for expanded space, for expanded staff, and for expanded hours during which the centers can remain open. No college mentioned a need for more hardware, although several said they need released time to develop specialized materials. They need more counselors to work closely with teachers in each part of the program. If they had more funds, they would give physiological tests to students with reading disabilities, reduce group size, and develop special programs for students returning to school after several years. Some have tried to compensate for lack of money by giving second-year students credit for tutoring beginners, by encouraging community people to volunteer for individual tutoring, or by giving full-time faculty three workload credits for every six hours a week they work in the center.

One director commented that such centers were overcrowded with confused students because English teachers themselves could not agree as to what was "good writing," but another director, who apparently is more cer-

tain as to what good writing is, said that if the skills center were adequate, the regular English course would "need not be diluted." One center is maintained primarily as a community service and helps regularly enrolled students only by special request. Another center, referred to as a "program midwife," is used to develop new approaches and programs; if these innovations are found to be successful in the centers, they are moved out to the departments they are designed to serve.

Responses from Private Two-Year Colleges

The two private two-year colleges reporting have student populations of less than 1100. One has an open admissions policy, the other a restricted admissions policy, but the operation of their centers seems very similar in spite of this difference. Both centers are partially supported by college funds and partly by federal grants. Neither center has a large staff; in both, one full-time teacher with an M.A. is helped by one or two assistants. The open admissions college, which is a technical institute, apparently operates its center partly for the benefit of the community, since it reports that students are referred to the center through employment agencies, parole officers, and newspaper ads. The school with restricted admissions allows remedial composition credit for work completed in the center. Both institutions admit students to the center in a variety of ways—voluntarily, through recommendations by counselors or teachers, or by requirements based on a writing sample or test score. Both report that their centers serve approximately three hundred students; both use printed and audio-visual programmed materials; and both use diagnostic and evaluative testing. Both centers report working with students on a tutorial schedule, though the school with restricted admissions also reports that some of the work is done in groups of eleven to fifteen students.

Responses from Public Four-Year Colleges

The questionnaires returned from the eighteen public four-year institutions illustrate wide variety of administrative arrangements and pedagogical techniques being used at skills centers. Several schools which did not, strictly speaking, have a skills center nonetheless answered the questionnaire. There was an instance of informal tutoring, a classroom-taught remedial course, and an experiment with PSI (the Keller Plan, or Personalized Systems Instruction). These responses may be useful in suggesting other means of fulfilling the functions skills centers hope to fulfill.

The number of students served over the past year ranges from 16 to 638, and there are some apparent anomalies. One center serves 200 students with two teachers with full-time faculty status and twelve graduate students, in addition to the director; another serves 200 students with one full-time teacher, three graduate students, and one undergraduate, in addition to the director. A third serves 200 students with seven graduate students and the director. The lab serving the most students (638) and the only one to indicate in writing the need for additional staff, is served by only three graduate students, but since this particular center indicated that all its work is done on a one-to-one tutorial basis, there seems little reason to fear that instruction is being depersonalized by a small staff attempting to handle large numbers of students. On the other hand, questions might be

asked about exactly what kinds of help this staff is able to provide to what kinds of students. Since the questionnaire did not request how many hours per week each of the staff works, it is difficult to know how adequately the centers are staffed. This is a crucial question, since the resolution was prompted by the potential danger posed by heavy reliance on programmed materials to compensate for understaffing.

In eleven of the eighteen public four-year colleges, requests for the centers came from the English department, and in one case from the freshman rhetoric program. Those centers requested by the administration seemed to be part of a larger skills-development program, external to departmental structure and sometimes including math as well as communication skills. At least five centers are funded by the English department (six, including the program in freshman rhetoric; eleven, including five programs which were initiated by the English department but which didn't answer the question about funding). Of the other seven programs, only one is federally funded; the others are funded through deans' offices, other departments, or university-financed developmental programs.

Though programs based in English departments concentrate on writing skills rather than on reading and study skills, these latter are sometimes included, and several of the respondents indicated that while the English department was concerned only with writing, other departments or programs within the institution did handle reading and study skills.

Only one center—a government-funded multi-purpose center—has full-time secretarial support; one other has a student aide, and the rest made no response or indicated that the center staff keeps their own records.

Since we did not ask for information on the training of directors, we do not know how many of them are or feel themselves to be specifically trained for teaching in or directing a skills center. Nonetheless, the credentials for the directors from whom we receive responses are generally impressive. Most directors hold a doctorate degree (sometimes an Ed.D., more often a Ph.D.); some hold a M.A., often with many hours completed toward the next degree. One holds a B.S. Ten of the programs are staffed at least in part by undergraduates, with respondents from three of these programs stating that the undergraduates are closely supervised; in one case they are enrolled simultaneously in an English methods course.

The responses from the four-year public institutions suggest that one-to-one instruction is at the heart of the skills center experience. All the respondents checked one-to-one tutorials as one of the instructional methods used. Ten respondents use printed programmed materials in addition, four use tapes or records.

Ten programs offer credit for at least some of their offerings (e.g., remedial reading, study skills, English as a second language, etc.), but it was sometimes hard to interpret responses when they were not supplemented by comments. One program mentioned that it gives credit in the section of the questionnaire on innovations; another noted that it gives credit only to associate degree students who are required to attend the lab as their freshman course. Yet another which checked the appropriate response for credit commented that credits "don't count toward graduation or degree." It is not possible to know to how many other programs this difficulty in interpretation would apply. It seems

that the general pattern in four-year public institutions is for skills centers to offer non-credit work which supplements the regular offerings.

Responses from Private Four-Year Colleges

Seventeen four-year private institutions responded to the survey. Of these seventeen, only eight have open admissions policies, and the student populations fall largely in the 500-11,000 range. The names of these centers vary: Learning Laboratory, Language Skills Laboratory, Learning Resource Center, Special Educational Services, Human Resources Center, Accelerated Learning Center. And just as varied are the persons, departments, and/or divisions which control and support the centers: English, Communications and Language Arts, Dean of Students, Library, Education and English, Tutoring Center, English and Student Affairs, Literature and Humanities. One center is supported by student fees, and six are separate units, not associated with or controlled by an administrative office, department, or division. Requests for establishing the centers originated primarily in English departments, although four had come from counselling staffs, four from the administration, and two from interdisciplinary committees.

Among a total of 126 persons working in these seventeen centers, only 2 have full-time faculty status, with graduate degrees in English or education. Eight others who hold graduate degrees in these areas have part-time faculty status, and eight who hold undergraduate degrees in these areas work either full- or part-time. In this limited number of private four-year institutions, the largest groups involved in the teaching process in the centers have undergraduate degrees in *other* disciplines (45) or are undergraduate employees having no specified academic affiliation (37).

These seventeen centers reported offering a variety of services and courses, including developmental and advanced reading, study skills, business letter and report writing, oral language, and English as a second language.

Students are admitted to the centers in various ways, more voluntarily than by requirement. When attendance is required, the requirement is based on evaluations of writing by classroom teachers or on the results of tests and/or writing samples. The number of students attending during an academic year varies from fifteen to one thousand, and the methods of attendance vary to include individual drop-ins (12), scheduled individual appointments (12), and scheduled groups in sizes ranging from two to five, to twenty-six.

Answers to the question about the length of time students attend indicated that all reporting centers adjust to students' needs. Students attend anywhere from the length of time needed for one individual project to more than a year. Methods of instruction include one-to-one tutorials (13), lectures to groups smaller than forty (6), printed programmed instructional materials (13), programmed cassettes, tapes, or records (13), reading machines (8), and computer outlet (1). Fourteen centers indicated that they make use of diagnostic and evaluative testing, and four are using texts or instructional techniques of their own design.

In meeting the needs of specific socioeconomic, linguistic, or geographic groups, five centers have developed techniques which employ peer tutoring, videotaping of both

individuals and groups to improve oral language skills, modified taped programs emphasizing writing rather than mechanics, "learning counseling," and contract systems.

Of these seventeen centers, twelve indicated a willingness to have students evaluate them, and one other was willing but indicated that it was still in a developing stage. Those who included information about problems or innovations mentioned the problems of removing the stigma attached to "bonehead English" and of asking or requiring students to work in the center for no academic credit. Innovations include mini-workshops in note-taking and study skills and individualized reading.

The resolution passed by NCTE in 1972 charged that the investigative committee determine, if possible, "the degree to which [the learning skills centers] promote and/or hinder the objectives of English courses." Not knowing the specific objectives of the English courses at these various institutions, the committee assumed the general objectives to be the development and/or improvement of written communication and, probably in many cases, reading skills. Only two of these seventeen colleges replied that all freshman English courses are actually taught in their centers, replacing required freshman writing courses. Five others indicated that they offer credit for remedial or required composition work done in the centers, and seven offer no credit.

Student Responses

Of the seventy-eight colleges which returned the questionnaires, sixty-one (28 four-year and 33 two-year) said they would be willing to have students evaluate their skills centers. Eleven said they would not, and six did not answer the question. Ten copies of a brief student questionnaire (see Attachment G) were therefore mailed to each of the sixty-one institutions, with a cover letter asking directors to distribute the questionnaires to students, duplicating extra copies if necessary, and to return the completed questionnaires to the committee. Unfortunately, the student questionnaires reached many schools very close to or after the end of the 1975 school year, so response was light. Ten sets of student responses were returned, seventy-three questionnaires in all; however, at one of the schools, work in the skills center *is* the freshman English course (students either work there or are excused from freshman composition), so the responses from those students were not included in this summary.

The remaining sixty-three student responses are from nine schools, all public two-year colleges. Since most of the questions were open-ended, asking for written comments, only three could be tabulated, those which asked how old the students were, how they heard about the skills center, and whether they would again choose to work in the center. Students ranged in age from 17 to over 35. Twenty-two were 17-21 years of age; sixteen were 22-25; ten were 26-35; and fifteen were over 35. Ten of the sixty-three said work in the skills center was required at registration; twenty-six said they were referred to the center by a teacher or a counselor; and thirty-four said they had heard about the center and attended because they felt a need for help. The total number of answers to this question is more than sixty-three because many students said they had both been referred to the center and had heard about it and decided to attend. The committee conjectures that students who had been referred to the center by a

teacher or counselor might also have checked "heard about it." This assumption is confirmed by the fact that no student who checked "required" checked either of the other options.

Almost all the students would choose to work in the skills center again. Two were undecided and two did not answer the question; the other fifty-nine responded positively, often writing "definitely," though one modified the positive answer by adding, "as long as the lab has information I can use." Other students commented that they intended to continue using the center, or encourage other students to use it, and several said they enjoyed the experience, liked the teachers, found the center a good place to get their homework done, or found that what they learned was helpful in subjects other than English.

Four of the centers apparently concentrate on reading skills. In one of these four there is heavy use of machines to improve speed and comprehension. Advanced reading is the only credit course; other courses are supplemental to the regular English courses. In another, the work can be taken for credit or as supplement; in the third the work is supplemental only; and in the fourth, a small rural school, work is done in regularly scheduled classes because the students, who have to commute forty miles round trip to the college, do not make use of the center on a drop-in basis.

All the programs, as described by the students, are capable of responding to individual needs. Material is presented in "packets," slide/tape lessons, tapes or cassettes, filmstrips, self-study cards, and "modular minicourses." One center apparently offers help for students who want to take the GED examination; one student, who had worked at the center for three college terms, commented, "I got the help, instruction, and incentive I needed to get by GED with a fairly decent score and pass four subjects in my first term of college." This center is staffed by faculty who receive three contact hour credits for six hours in the skills center.

Another center apparently provides help in basic skills for several departments. Students mentioned working on math review, using audio aids in working assigned physics problems, improving comprehension in French from work in reading, and increasing shorthand speed by using taped dictation practice. One student explained, "I listened to a tape . . . taking note of some of the important things. While I'm listening, I'm reading the material which [is on] the tape."

Students liked the skills centers because "there is always an instructor present for any questions that may come up," "they play soft music in the background which [makes] it easier to concentrate on what you [are] trying to write," "it has taught me how to study again," and because, "if you have a particular problem you will not slow the rest of the class down."

Student evaluations, of course, came only from students still working in the centers; those who had dropped out or who had come only once were not available for comments. However, these nine skills centers, as seen through the eyes of the students who did respond, seem to be accomplishing what the directors reported they were attempting to do.

In lieu of student responses, unavailable because the college year had already ended, one director sent an analysis by an upper division student who had worked as an assistant in the

skills center. Because that paper gives another view of what goes on in a well-run center, the committee is including it as part of this report (see Attachment H).

Comments and Recommendations

The committee's task was in some ways impossible. As anyone reading this report is aware, there are many successful ways of teaching composition and communication, and there is no reason to think that controversies within our profession about the objectives of English courses (even limiting these to writing courses) vill not exist among those setting up and administering labs. Nor were we disturbed by the existence of controversy or diversity. But we did feel that whatever our pedagogical orientations, there were some serious dangers to be avoided. We knew that many red herrings had been dragged across the skills centers' paths, false dilemmas posed while real problems were not acknowledged. We knew, for instance, that divorce proceeding had been instigated between concepts which should have made very happy bedfellows, such as structure and flexibility. For, if "structure" means that students and teacher are both aware of a beginning and probable end point of their work, who would deny that a structured program is an asset in a learning lab? And if "flexibility" means that students and teacher take advantage of and accommodate their specific strengths and weaknesses, certainly flexibility is essential and possible within a structured program. At the other extreme, concepts were yoked together which did not necessarily belong together. And the impetus of this study was the fear of one such yoking in particular, that of individualized instruction and programmed materials. Certainly the use of programmed materials as well as of more sophisticated educational technology and systems approaches need not compromise individualized instruction. But those of us on the committee felt that the boundaries of "individualized instruction" themselves needed reexamining. We were aware that "individualized instruction" can, without dishonesty, cover a wide range of pedagogical strategies whose lowest common denominator might be the neutral one of having program materials so organized that students can work independently of other students. We were aware that "individualized instruction" can mean students proceeding at their own pace, in response to diagnoses of their individual needs. We were also aware that "individualized instruction" can mean students working alone, completing drills in separate carrells using elaborate equipment perhaps, but isolated from the encouragement, attention, and humanity central to all teaching and the *sine qua non* of any skills center worthy of the name.

Although the questionnaire did ask how many teachers and assistants worked in the centers and how many students attended, we realized only as we analyzed the returns that a useful question would have been, "What is the *ratio* of staff to students?" This proportion is difficult to estimate, since there is no way of knowing how many hours part-time or volunteer staff work in the centers, and no way to know how many of the students using the centers drop in only once or twice, how many of them attend regularly. If a college reported "600 students," that could mean six hundred single visits of half an hour each, a total of three hundred student hours during the year; or it could mean six hundred people reporting for an hour three times a week, a total of 2700

student hours in a fifteen week semester. More likely, at most colleges, it meant something in between.

What the information obtained from the survey does seem to show is that skills centers have multiplied considerably during the last decade. They began to appear in the late sixties and early seventies, though not always with that title nor with the federally supported budgets sometimes associated with them. The reasons for this growth have not been thoroughly analyzed, though some explanations are perhaps more easily available than others. The growth does seem to parallel the expansion of two-year colleges, open admissions policies, and increased sensitivity to the needs of men and women previously kept out of or unable to succeed in the educational mainstream.

Sessions at CCCC and NCTE have been devoted to skills centers since 1971. From the beginning a wide variety of formats has been reported but, if the discussions taking place at conventions are an indication, experience in the centers has often led to a shift in emphasis, both in the centers themselves and in other courses in the colleges.

(1) Though many centers (or writing labs or clinics as they were often called) were set up to provide help for students with "problems in fundamentals," the notion of what was fundamental changed significantly, had less to do with grammar and sentence structure than with the problematic attitudes of students toward "English" (and all it had come to imply) and toward themselves as potential users of language.

(2) Instructors released from a judgmental role and encouraged in an advocacy role were free to make discoveries about learning and teaching and develop different attitudes toward students who were "failing." They became sensitized to the crucial role that self-confidence and self-esteem play in verbal behavior, and they discovered that, often, what showed up as writing difficulties can be difficulties in other skills, sometimes reading, sometimes perception itself. In one institution, for instance, the reading laboratory grew directly out of the needs identified by the writing laboratory staff.

(3) Many teachers had not been specifically trained for their positions as directors of skills centers. (The years that have seen the growth of labs have also seen the growth of programs specifically geared to training teachers of communications skills.) One of the results of this situation was that teachers needed and wanted help in developing materials and techniques that would be particularly applicable to the needs of a laboratory situation. And, as if by the magic of supply and demand, help began to appear, for coincidental with the development of skills centers was the development by commercial companies of programmed materials and equipment promising to be ideally suited to the "individualized instruction" which early became the shibboleth of the centers. Many of these materials were good, many were not, but the temptation to buy hard and software was often considerable.

Indications now are that much of the equipment and material purchased in these early days is resting quietly in supply closets. One institution is recycling the thousands of sheets of paper on which, the summer before the lab opened, the directors had prepared grammar exercises carefully coordinated with a programmed text which they were subsequently unable to use successfully.

Based on the information received

through this survey, the committee believes that some fears have been exaggerated; it seems unlikely that mechanization will replace instructors, or that skills centers care *only* about the mechanical aspects of writing. Nevertheless, some tendencies are there, and the committee thinks the profession should be aware of them.

One such tendency, emphasized by the number of directors who said their centers need more counseling help, is for students to be handed exercises or materials without careful inquiry as to whether that learning fits their actual needs. One of the most important criteria in evaluating skills centers is that students, as they work for mastery in reading and writing skills, be guided by qualified, certificated instructors and well-trained assistants. Merely to send students to a center where they select what they believe they need is no better than dropping them or their dropping from a course because they cannot cope with it. If students have little or no background in a subject, they have no way of knowing what is either necessary or available to help them build a foundation of knowledge. As a result, they probably will work with bits and pieces having little sequence and will not be able to fill their information gaps. It is like having doctors send patients into a pharmacy to select for themselves from all the medications on the shelf those that will help them overcome their problems. What they choose might not help at all, or it might even kill them. If students are to get the help they need, they must be able to work with perceptive instructors who can analyze their backgrounds and give them work appropriate to their needs. Delegating this kind of responsibility to untrained assistants does great disservice to students, students who must experience a series of small successes if they are to gain the self-confidence necessary to learning.

In order to give each student adequate help, instructors should be responsible for no more than twenty-five students an hour, and even then they should have at least one well-trained assistant with at least a bachelor's degree, or two or three paraprofessionals or undergraduate students who have themselves completed reading and writing courses. The paraprofessional and undergraduate assistants are themselves learning as they work with students, and they must have adequate time to consult with the instructor, either to verify their decisions or to get advice (see Attachment H).

It seems also important that some members of the staff be available for students who do not attend regularly but merely come by with special problems. If no one is available when students do come in, or if they must make appointments several days ahead, they are likely to become discouraged and not use the centers. Many of the colleges represented in the survey said that such drop-in services are an important part of their program, and the committee believes that such incidental help, on hand whenever it is needed, may be one of the most valuable services the centers can perform.

For students who do attend the centers on a regular schedule, credit is a major consideration. Although it is fairly usual for four-year institutions, especially, to be sticky about offering credit for remedial work, assuming that such credit compromises standards, the committee believes that lack of credit, if required work is successfully completed, may be one of the reasons that some students don't take advantage of compensatory programs.

In addition to being a means of certifying academic worth, "giving credit" is a means of giving students time to spend on the materials or skills in question. Especially since additional work in reading, writing, and speaking might be necessary for some students to get the most out of their other courses, it seems illogical not to give credit, i.e., not to allow time within the regular workload for the work which will make success possible. It would not lower standards but raise them if a situation were created which encouraged the attainment of communication skills.

The committee further believes that skills centers must insure that small staffs are not overworked to the point where they have neither time nor energy to give the attention they know their students need. The staff must be sufficiently well supported by clerical help and sufficiently well trained so that they will not be forced to rely on programmed materials as substitutes for rather than supplements to teaching. Money can be at the root of what is good as well as what is evil. Compensatory education should be costly, not because it demands the purchase of elaborate machinery or kits, but because it demands a low student-teacher ratio to counteract the self-doubt of students who have not enjoyed previous successes.

Perhaps most important, skills centers must not become dumping grounds for students that a school is forced to admit by enrollment policies but that it doesn't want or feel any obligation toward. Successful skills centers work with the other parts of a college; they do not serve as excuses for other departments or as replacements for teachers unwilling or unable to give their own students patient assistance.

Teaching communication skills is one of the most difficult jobs in the academy because what is considered acceptable language behavior is so deeply entangled with extra-linguistic concerns—from the financial status and birthplace of one's parents to one's own self-esteem. Skills centers are not panaceas. But they can be arenas where the challenges to our discipline are met honestly and bravely by faculty and students alike.

CCCC Committee
on Learning Skills Centers

Attachments

Attachment A
Results of the Postcard Survey

	Two-Year			Four-Year			Total
	Private	Public	Total	Private	Public	Total	by Size
Up to 500	4	10	14	5	0	5	19
500–1100	2	14	16	22	1	23	39
1100–1600	0	14	14	9	1	10	24
1600–3000	0	15	15	5	5	10	25
3000–5000	0	8	8	2	3	5	17
5000–8000	0	11	11	0	6	6	17
8000–11,000	0	1	1	1	4	5	6
11,000–15,000	0	3	3	0	7	7	10
15,000–25,000	0	0	0	0	5	5	5
30,000	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
45,000	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Total	6	76	82	44	34	78	160

Attachment B
Computer Analysis of Survey Questionnaire Returns

(The text follows that of the questionnaire. NA means "no answer.")

Questionnaires sent out: 159
Questionnaires returned: 78

1. What is the name of your college or university?
2. Is it a public or a private institution? public: 57; private: 21.
3. Is it a four-year or a two-year institution? four-year: 38; two-year: 40.
4. Does the institution have open or restricted admission? open: 59; restricted: 19.
5. What is the name of the learning skills center (the area where students acquire or improve reading, writing and other skills) at your institution?
6. Is the learning skills center a separate unit of the institution, not controlled by any customary department or division? yes: 20; no: 55; NA: 3.

7. If the answer to question 6 is "no," with what department or division is it associated?

8. From what primary source did the request come to establish the center? Please check one. Students: 7; a department or division(specify): 30; a committee from different departments or divisions: 7; board of regents: 1; counseling staff: 3; administration: 21; other (specify): 6; NA: 3.

9. Please check the appropriate blank in the first two columns for any service or course which your institution offers through the skills center. Also check the appropriate blank in the last three columns to indicate how the skills center affects the services or courses as they were previously offered. Under "other," please list only courses relating to composition or communication.

	(NA)	For Credit	For Noncredit	Supplements	Replaces	Incorporates
Remedial reading	28	30	24	20	6	9
Developmental reading	23	34	28	25	6	9
Advanced (or speed) reading	35	26	22	18	6	7
Study skills	27	25	32	22	7	9
Oral language	55	7	12	11	1	3
English as a second language	42	16	18	17	4	4
Remedial composition	14	32	37	28	8	9
Non-transferable composition (applicable only to community colleges)	63	9	7	7	1	1
Required freshman writing course	37	25	11	19	6	6
Other (specify)	75	3	2	1	0	1
	65	9	6	6	2	2
	72	5	2	2	1	0
	75	2	1	0	0	0
	76	1	1	0	0	0

10. How are students brought into the skills center? Please check all applicable categories. Voluntarily: 68; required by counselor: 23; suggested by classroom teacher: 62; required by classroom teacher: 24; required by writing sample and test score: 20; required by writing sample: 14; required by test score: 19; other (specify): 30; NA: 1.

11. If the skills center has been in operation for a full academic year, approximately how many students have attended the skills center during the last year?

12. In which of the following ways do students make use of the skills center? Please check where applicable. Individual drop-in basis: 61; scheduled individual appointments: 56; in scheduled groups: 46. Approximate size of groups: 2-5: 24; 6-10:11; 11-15: 13; 16-19: 2; 20 or more: 10. If more than 20, maximum size of any group: 10. Other (specify): 13. NA: 1.

13. How long do students attend the skills center? Please check all options open to the student. Long enough to complete an individual project: 62; semester: 40; mini-semester: 15; quarter: 18; year: 29; longer than a year: 27; NA: 1.

14. In your judgment, what causes students to stop attending the skills center before they have completed their assigned or chosen program? Please check all applicable answers.

	Frequently	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	NA
Low motivation	31	35	4	0	7
Lack of sense of progress	0	33	23	4	18
Method of instruction	1	27	29	4	18
Embarassment associated with doing remedial work	5	22	23	8	20
Conflict with job	17	28	15	1	17
Economic or emotional factors unrelated to skills center	15	35	14	1	13
Time demands of other courses	16	36	11	1	14

15. Please check the instructional methods and aids used in the skills center. Under "other," specify what methods not listed here are used. One-to-one tutorial: 71; reading machines: 49; lectures to a group larger than 40: 6; computer outlets: 6; lectures to a group smaller than 40: 28; diagnostic testing: 60; printed programmed instructional materials: 63; evaluative testing: 55; programmed cassettes, tapes or records: 57; student selection of goals: 35; student selection of learning materials: 40; student selection of activities: 31; student selection of instructional techniques: 28; self-pacing: 57, self-assessment followed by cooperative assessment: 37; other (specify): 12; NA: 1.

16. How is the sequence of instructional material in the center presented to the student? Please check all applicable categories. Sequential order: 49; random order: 21; order determined by student preference: 30; order determined by student need: 70; order determined by instructor's preference: 38; NA: 1.

17. Has the skills center developed or discovered special instructional techniques geared to the needs of specific socioeconomic, linguistic or geographic groups? yes: 26; no: 46; NA: 6.

18. If the answer to question 17 is "yes," could you comment briefly on the techniques used: NA: 50; comments: 28.

19. Does the center individualize instruction; that is, do you allow for variations within a specific program of skills instruction based on the needs and desires of an individual student? yes: 73; no: 2; NA: 3.

20. If the answer to question 19 is "yes," would you briefly comment on how you individualize instruction: NA: 14; comment: 64.

21. Who pays for the skills center and any special programs therein? Please check all applicable sources and indicate the approximate percentage. The educational institution itself; one or more federal agencies; one or more state agencies; one or more local governmental agencies; a corporation(s); a foundation(s); private philanthropy; other (specify).

22. How many directors are in charge of the skills center? 1: 57; 2: 9; 3: 2; 4: 0; 5: 0; 6: 1; NA: 9.

23. What is the highest relevant degree and in what academic discipline is it held by the director(s)?

24. What is the academic rank of the director(s)?

25. In addition to administrative duties what other skills center related work is done by the director(s)? Please check: One-to-one tutorial instruction: 47; preparing lectures:

28; preparing study aids: 45; administering tests: 46; grading student compositions: 22; making assignments to students: 41; counseling of students: 46; other (specify): 22; none: 7; NA: 1.

CATEGORIES OF LEARNING SKILLS CENTER'S PERSONNEL IN ADDITION TO DIRECTOR(S)

Category A	Teachers (full-time faculty status) with graduate degrees in English or Education
Category B	Teachers (full-time faculty status) with graduate degrees in other disciplines
Category C	Teachers (part time faculty status) with graduate degrees in English or Education
Category D	Teachers (part time faculty status) with graduate degrees in other disciplines
Category E	Graduate Assistants aiding in the teaching process and working toward degrees in English or Education
Category F	Graduate Assistants aiding in the teaching process and working toward degrees in other disciplines
Category G	Full Time Employees aiding in the teaching process and holding, as their highest degrees, BA or BS degrees in English or Education
Category H	Full Time Employees aiding in the teaching process and holding, as their highest degrees, BA or BS degrees in other disciplines
Category I	Part Time Employees aiding in the teaching process and holding, as their highest degrees, BA or BS degrees in English or Education
Category J	Part Time Employees aiding in the teaching process and holding, as their highest degrees, BA or BS degrees in other disciplines
Category K	Current Undergraduate Employees aiding in the teaching process
Category L	Paraprofessionals (people not now, and perhaps never, enrolled in an undergraduate program) aiding in the teaching process.

26. How many members of each category do you have working in the skills center on courses or skills relating to composition or communication?

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	NA
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

27. Please check what kind of work is done by the members of each category.

Preparing lectures	24	5	4	5	1	2	3	4	1	1	3	0	46
Preparing study aids	35	11	8	8	5	3	10	4	5	5	10	6	22
Making assignments to students	37	8	9	8	5	3	7	6	6	4	16	6	20
Administering tests	34	8	9	8	3	1	9	6	5	4	16	10	21
Counseling of students	37	10	10	6	6	1	8	2	6	2	9	3	26
Grading student compositions	31	5	8	5	3	2	5	2	3	1	8	4	32
Others	3						1				1	2	71

28. Please list and describe the jobs for personnel working in the skills center who are not included in the previous categories, e.g., secretaries.

29. Would you be willing to have a student evaluation of your skills center conducted by yourself through questionnaires mailed to you by the Conference on College Composition and Communication? yes: 61; no: 11; NA: 6.

30. Please tell us anything which you think is important (e.g., problem areas, pedagogical innovations) about your skills center that is not covered in this questionnaire.

Attachment C
Public Two-Year Colleges Only

22. How many directors are in charge of the skills center? 1: 26; 2: 5; 3: 1; 4: 1.

23. What is the highest relevant degree and in what academic discipline is it held by the director(s)? Ph.D. and Ed.D.: 6 (English: 1; Education: 5). M.A. or M.S. degrees are held by all other directors except for four directors who held the CAS or CAGS or Advanced Certificates. One director was a Teacher's Aide.

24. What is the academic rank of the director(s)? From Teacher's Aide to Dean to President.

25. In addition to administrative duties what other skills center related work is done by the director(s)? Please check: One-to-one tutorial instruction: 28; preparing lectures: 19; preparing study aids: 23; administering tests: 27; grading student compositions: 10; making assignments to students: 24; counseling of students: 22; other (specify): interviewing: 2; preparing reports and proposals: 4; reading eye camera exam: 1; teaching lab sessions: 1; none: 2.

CATEGORIES OF LEARNING SKILLS CENTER'S PERSONNEL
IN ADDITION TO DIRECTOR(S)

Category A	Teachers (full time faculty status) with graduate degrees in English or Education
Category B	Teachers (full time faculty status) with graduate degrees in other disciplines
Category C	Teachers (part time faculty status) with graduate degrees in English or Education
Category D	Teachers (part time faculty status) with graduate degrees in other disciplines
Category E	Graduate Assistants aiding in the teaching process and working toward degrees in English or Education
Category F	Graduate Assistants aiding in the teaching process and working toward degrees in other disciplines
Category G	Full Time Employees aiding in the teaching process and holding, as their highest degrees, BA or BS degrees in English or Education
Category H	Full Time Employees aiding in the teaching process and holding, as their highest degrees, BA or BS degrees in other disciplines
Category I	Part Time Employees aiding in the teaching process and holding, as their highest degrees, BA or BS degrees in English or Education

Category J — Part Time Employees aiding in the teaching process and holding, as their highest degrees, BA or BS degrees in other disciplines

Category K — Current Undergraduate Employees aiding in the teaching process

Category L — Paraprofessionals (people not now, and perhaps never, enrolled in an undergraduate program) aiding in the teaching process

26. How many members of each category do you have working in the skills center on courses or skills relating to composition or communication?

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
72	17	14	12	2	1	15	12	6	8	31	26

27. Please check what kind of work is done by the members of each category.

Preparing lectures	17	6	1	4	0	1	4	2	3	1	2	0
Preparing study aids	23	8	7	6	1	1	6	4	2	3	5	5
Making assignments to students	17	8	6	7	2	5	0	2	2	2	8	5
Administering tests	33	8	6	6	2	2	6	4	2	3	10	9
Counseling of students	20	8	1	5	1	0	6	2	2	1	4	4
Grading student compositions	24	4	5	4	1	1	5	2	0	1	5	4
Others: conducting discussion	2											
recordkeeping	2											

28. Please list and describe the jobs for personnel working in the skills center who are not included in the previous categories, e.g., secretaries. Work/study students, tutors, clerical assistants, RSVP (retired) instructors.

Attachment D
Public Two-Year Colleges Only

9. Please check the appropriate blank in the first two columns for any service or course which your institution offers through the skills center. Also check the appropriate blank in the last three columns to indicate how the skills center affects the services or courses as they were previously offered. Under "other," please list only courses relating to composition or communication.

	For Credit	For Noncredit	Supplements	Replaces	Incorporates
Remedial reading	26	18	15	3	8
Developmental reading	26	21	17	3	7
Advanced (or speed) reading	23	17	13	5	6
Study skills	19	17	14	4	6
Oral language	7	4	7	2	4

English as a second language	12	11	9	4	4
Remedial composition	18	19	14	4	7
Non-transferable composition (applicable only to community colleges)	12	7	8	2	2
Required freshman writing course	13	3	9	4	2
Other (specify): Speech	3	3	1	0	1
Listening skills	4	1	2	1	1
Technical writing	2	2	0	0	0
Mathematics	1	2	2	1	0
G.E.D. preparation	2	1	1	0	1

Attachment E
Public Two-Year Colleges Only

15. Please check the instructional methods and aids used in the skills center. Under "other," specify what methods not listed here are used. One-to-one tutorial: 39; reading machines: 33; lectures to a group larger than 40: 3; computer outlets: 0; lectures to a group smaller than 40: 18; diagnostic testing: 35; printed programmed instructional materials: 38; evaluative testing: 36; programmed cassettes, tapes or records: 39; student selection of goals: 25; student selection of learning materials: 28; student selection of activities: 23; student selection of instructional techniques: 23; self-pacing: 35; self-assessment followed by cooperative assessment: 22; other (specify): peer tutoring/evaluation: 2; reinforcement labs for H.E.A.P.: 2; seminars and discussion groups.

Attachment F
Public Two-Year Colleges Only

14. In your judgment, what causes students to stop attending the skills center before they have completed their assigned or chosen program? Please check all applicable answers.

	Frequently	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Low motivation	17	19	3	0
Lack of sense of progress	0	17	14	2
Method of instruction	0	15	20	2
Embarassment associated with doing remedial work	4	9	17	4
Conflict with job	11	15	8	0
Economic or emotional factors unrelated to skills center	11	13	8	0
Time demands of other courses	7	20	7	0

Attachment G
Student Questionnaire

Name of college _____

Address of college _____

How long did you work in the skills center?

___ weeks ___ college quarters ___ college semester ___ total hours

How old are you? ___ 17-21 ___ 22-25 ___ 26-35 ___ over 35

Why did you decide to go to the skills center?

___ required at registration
___ referred by a teacher or counsellor
___ heard about it and felt a need for help

Has the skills center helped you with reading? How?

Has the skills center helped you in writing? How?

Has the skills center helped you with other classes you are taking? How?

If you had it to do again, would you choose to work in the skills center?

Describe what you did in the skills center. Use the back of this sheet, too, if you need that much space.

Attachment H
A Lab Assistant's View

My experience in the writing lab has made me aware of many things that will be helpful to me as a teacher, and it has also made me aware of my own shortcomings as a student. As I worked with the students, I saw many of my own problems very clearly. Up until this time, no one had ever made me realize that my main problem when it comes to writing has been complete lack of organization. My own teachers were probably unaware of it themselves; I would simply get back essay tests with few or no marks of explanation and a mediocre grade. I hope that when I begin teaching, I will be able to use what I have learned from my association with the students and the lectures to tell my future students what they are doing wrong and how they can improve.

Working with the students and discussing their problems in class has made me aware of several things which should help me when I begin teaching. First, individual help is necessary. Standing up in front of the students and making generalizations is necessary of course, but many students are incapable of applying what is being said to their own problems. Some students hate to admit that they make mistakes. Student A is a good example of this kind of student; he was hard to convince when I showed him specific mistakes he'd made so I'm sure he simply ignores any sort of general criticism in class. Other students, like student B, are grateful for any help they are offered; B's problem is that he doesn't recognize his faults unless they are specifically pointed out to him. Another group of students misunderstand what the teacher wants; student C is one of these, and he quickly adapted as soon as the misunderstanding was cleared up. The important thing is that before any student is considered a failure, the teacher should try individual help.

The second important thing I discovered is that students can't learn by memorizing rules. With very few exceptions, book definitions mean little to students. They must see concrete examples of what is to be learned. The organization sheet and the punctuation packet are excellent devices to show the students the correct way to do what the textbook tells them to do. They must see rules in action. The organization sheet will be discussed more completely later, but it is important here to mention that many of the people in the labs didn't know

what analysis or illustration meant until they saw the examples in the packet. The punctuation exercises were excellent because all the rules in the world are of little value until the student sees them in action. By seeing how professional writers use commas, the students understand that there are good reasons for each rule. Then, when they start writing, they will have more concrete examples to follow than single sentences which textbooks usually use as examples.

The third and most important fact is that all the students needed help in organizing their paragraphs. To many students, ideas are illusive things which can't be pinned down or arranged in any manner. When their ideas become realities, as they do when the organization sheet is used, the ideas can be managed and arranged. There are students who can't start writing at all because they can't get their thoughts in order. As soon as they start talking out loud everything becomes clear. The next step is to get them to write their thoughts down and then the writing of a paper can be started. Then there are those students who start writing without thinking at all; A is one of the latter. He would write a paragraph and then read it to see what he was thinking. He quickly found out that it is easier to rearrange ideas on the organization sheet than it is to rewrite an entire paragraph.

The use of the organization sheet was a big help to me as a student. As I helped the boys in the lab, I recognized my own problems. One of the main problems that all the boys had in common was that they tended to make generalizations. If the instructor asked for a certain broad subject to be covered, the students would try to include the entire book in one paragraph; this naturally led to broad generalizations, with no room for detail. When they started using the organization sheets, they could see that they weren't backing up any of their statements. As I would discuss specific subjects with them, they would suddenly realize that they would have to narrow down the subject matter to include everything that they wanted to say about any one point. The more I pointed this out to the students, the more I realized that this had often been my problem. On a test anyone can make broad statements to cover several subjects, but the higher grades go to the students that get specific.

One important thing that all the boys had in common was their thorough knowledge of the subject matter; the opposite should have been true of students who were failing. The fact that they all had read the assigned readings interested me because I often have known as much or more about certain subjects than other students and yet would get lower scores on a test. As I helped my three students with each of their more obvious problems, I saw the similarity between their problems and mine. B said he thought that the teacher already knew the material and that was why he always seemed to be making unproved statements. As I told B to be specific about his subject matter, I realized why some papers I had had returned to me would simply say "why?" with no other comment. C had a tendency to make up his mind about what he was going to prove and then have trouble proving his point. As I told C to find all the proof first and then make his conclusions, I realized why some of my research papers had been so hard to write. As I have mentioned before, A would write his paragraph first, then look for his proof. Telling A to get his ideas down first and then arrange them is what helped me write this paper. It's a lot easier this way.

I hope that I have helped the boys as much as I think I have. If they have learned to write down the important facts about a known subject and then arrange them in logical order, they should be ready for most essay tests. And if they have learned to list anything they find about a new or unknown subject and then draw their conclusions, they should be ready to write a research paper. The important thing that I hope that I have done is to teach the students how to write, not how to get a passing grade in a communications class. I wish that I had learned better organization as a freshman. As a senior, I believe that I have learned to be a better teacher.

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